Appendix D

Comments Content Analysis
“I think the racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. is insidious. In other words, people say that we are so good, but in reality, there is a lot of distrust, hate, etc.”

“I am aware that I experience this campus differently because I am white, middle class, Christian, and straight. I recognize and respect that others who do not experience the same privileges as me would respond differently to many of these items.”

Out of 1625 surveys received, more than 420 respondents contributed remarks about the state of diversity at NDSU, its perceived strengths and weaknesses and potential solutions, and about the survey itself. Respondents included undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, as well as administrators, faculty, support staff. Generally, respondents were divided between whether attention to diversity and climate issues was a positive or negative aspect of the University’s atmosphere. Many respondents praised NDSU for its efforts to create a diverse, welcoming atmosphere and asserted that the climate has improved in recent years. However, a number of people suggested the campus would further benefit from an array of actions to promote diversity and understanding.

Partially due to the format and content of the survey instrument, particular themes reverberated throughout the comments about the University. Respondents reported their own experiences with and their observations of discrimination or harassment in the workplace and on campus. Additionally, respondents described a variety of proactive and reactive actions in regard to inclusiveness and equality. Many people shared suggestions for improving efforts within the University or their department/unit, while others advanced no suggestions and instead stated there is no need to find a solution to problems that do not exist or are not the University’s responsibility.
Additionally, people expressed their opinions about the myriad of campus constituents and ideas, generally using similar wording as was in the survey. Among other topics, individuals wrote about women and men; race and ethnicity; religion; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons; staff, faculty, students, and the administration; and the ideology of diversity.

The Demographic State of NDSU

The following comments represent individuals’ opinions of NDSU’s demographic profile.

“I think that because this campus and community tends to be so homogeneous, often people on this campus make assumptions that everyone is the same: Christian, American, heterosexual, religious, etc. Therefore, if you don't fit into one of these expected categories, it is easy to feel alienated. I don't think that the people here necessarily alienate others intentionally, but I think that they tend to make these automatic assumptions because some of them don't have many experiences with people they know who are different.”

“Historically, this is a relatively conservative area, and somewhat ethnically, religiously and racially homogenous. Long standing prejudices and ethnic profiles exist. Unfortunately, people consider themselves much more tolerant than they actually are, so probably don't recognize that a problem might exist.”

Major Themes of Respondents’ Remarks

Respondents commented on the predominant themes of the survey instrument including: gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity, religion, ideology of diversity, administrative leadership, job status, and age. See the table at the end of this summary for an illustration of the major concerns, the chief advances, and representative remarks of survey participants who contributed written comments.

The content analysis of respondents’ comments yielded two chief issues. First, respondents contributed more comments about gender and gender differences than of any other topic. While individuals’ remarks undoubtedly provided evidence of support for and understanding of gender
differences, many respondents commented on a number of ways in which colleagues or students have subjected women and men to inequitable treatment. The observations of many of the respondents suggested that NDSU has improved in recent years, and that the campus can be sensitive to diverse staff and clients. However, respondents’ words were, more often than not, hostile in this regard. The following quotes illustrate this point:

“Women faculty leave here. Why? No paid leave for childbirth, little daycare availability for faculty. No women colleagues!”

“As one of few women faculty on this campus, I have a heavier workload and can see my fellow female faculty members have heavier workloads than men because we are selected to "represent" all women faculty members on all committees. Fewer women than men, same number of committees, more work. Also, I am bothered by the number of women who achieve tenure as opposed to the number of men, and I am concerned with the high number of women adjuncts…."

“Male faculty can be harassed by female students.”

“My biggest issue comes from the way in which the input from men is more valued than that from women. This is a problem in our department specifically. I think that also has influenced raises and merit pay. I also know that some suggestions made by female faculty and staff are overlooked until they are affirmed by the older male faculty. That is EXTREMELY frustrating.”

“The upper administration of NDSU, Deans, Directors, and above, are still largely white males. The lack of diversity provides few role models for women students and students who are not white…..”

“There is discrimination against the white male at NDSU. If NDSU offered men's week, or men's professional development sessions, it would be considered discriminatory, but it is okay for women or ‘diverse’ groups. Reverse discrimination is a reality at NDSU and it has been and continues to be considered acceptable.”

“NDSU is trying hard to move on into a more multi-cultural university. I think it's doing a good job at working at it. I really only feel any sort of prejudice or anything when working in a group of mostly guys since I am in a male dominated field and am outnumbered all the time…. I feel a lot of discrimination at times because of the stereotype that women can't make it as engineers.”

The second issue respondents’ remarks raised concerned race and ethnicity. Respondents noted that the “good old boys” network values homogeneity and exhibits subtle and/or institutionalized discrimination of racial and ethnic minorities. According to the comments, many individuals who are U.S.-born citizens and native English-speakers believe persons of other races and ethnicities should speak English and behave like White (non-Hispanic), middle-class persons.
Moreover, people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds feel as though they cannot “be themselves” without encountering various forms of discrimination and harassment. People from underrepresented groups who work in such environments meet many obstacles. One person reported, for instance,

“Being black at NDSU is not as easy as people think it is. We (colored people) experience racism on a very constant basis here at NDSU. Sometimes, I feel like people wish there were less black people at NDSU, and even in Fargo.”

Others commented,

“Students do not want to listen or learn from the instructor and blame their poor grades on the instructor can’t understand English, can’t speak English at all….”

“For example, as a non-practicing Jew, I don't find that people here on campus are actively prejudiced against me, but I do sometimes feel uncomfortable because it seems to be assumed that everyone here at NDSU is Christian (and religious). Also, I have heard gay and lesbian students and faculty on campus say that they are uncomfortable coming out on campus because this campus is an unfriendly environment for GLBT people….”

“The only problem I have with the climate at NDSU is that I have instructors that can hardly speak English. I have no problem with how they look or where they come from. I appreciate that they are teaching and I respect him/her for that. I can not understand how they are allowed to teach without being able to communicate effectively.”

“While NDSU is a very friendly place and welcoming, I sense resentment against Native Americans and stereotyping amongst non-whites.”

“NDSU is designed for the Norwegian and German people, who welcome Chinese and Mid-easterners. They don't want anybody else around, especially, Latinas, American-Indians, African-Americans, or anybody who is not of their masters race ideal.”

**Emergent Themes**

In addition to the “underrepresented” categories mentioned above, a number of comments introduced issues and concerns of veterans, socio-economic status, adult or returning students, parenting students, and people with psychological illness or “invisible” disabilities. Respondents sought their organization’s attention to encourage and support equality for these neglected constituents.
“As a disability student I have regularly been harassed by my teachers. Teachers have been confrontational about their opinions about my right to be a student to receive accommodations due to my disability. Inappropriate comments have been made when I meet with them to deliver my disability paperwork (the paperwork informing the teacher of the classroom modifications).”

“I have seen discrimination practiced on students with disabilities. I have seen faculty who question the accommodations that need to be made for disabled students, and even refuse the accommodations. I have personally felt negative repercussions from faculty simply by associating with disabled students.”

“The main issue I have dealt with is being a student older than average trying to feel at home in the classroom. Sometimes professors will refer to age and just include the young ones as if older students do not (or should not) exist.”

**What’s Happening in the Organization?**

“Most of my concerns have been from other students who seem completely ignorant of other religions, ethnicities, cultures, genders, and sexual orientations. I feel welcomed as a white man but not as a gay man. I can hide that though if I choose. I couldn't hide my race or ethnicity if I wasn't a Christian-raised white guy. I worry most about the people from the minorities of race, religion (especially Islamic now) and gender.”

**Perception: Experiences and Observations**

Although many individuals praised NDSU for its efforts to create a diverse, welcoming atmosphere, other respondents perceived that the campus has been less welcoming for underrepresented groups. Respondents reported covert and institutionalized racism, sexism, and other bias. One individual reported,

“Even though NDSU may be outspoken about many of the issues in this survey, many of the anthropological and psychology classes … make no distinction or disclaimer that most of the things discussed applies only to Anglo society on such things like deviance and cultural norms; still the idea of what and who is ‘inferior’ or ‘superior’ and ‘primitive’ or ‘advanced’ is still the underlying theme in many of those classes. I am sure that NDSU is not the only University with these themes.”

Others stated,

“I don't think that NDSU is particularly welcoming to any minority group, especially those in the LGBTQ community. We have had our chalking graffitied, I have been spit at, called names, had things written on my marker board, had people threaten me, etc.”
“As a straight supporter of the GLBTQ2-S community, I wear a rainbow ribbon on my backpack that has prompted comments both to me and behind my back. This is why I have experienced discrimination even as a straight person.”

“As a heterosexual… I am sometimes seen as gay or bi. Except when it seem important, I do not identify as straight. Consequently I struggle with my own internalized homophobia (at times) as well as homophobic responses from people who assume I am not straight.”

“I want to see open support during Coming Out Week rather than anti-gay chalkings and death threats on answering machines that are ignored by the campus police.”

One of the greatest obstacles in discussing campus climate was the range or lack of participant’s understanding of “diversity,” “equality,” “discrimination,” and “harassment,” to name a few. The discrepancies in definitions likely contribute to individuals’ inability to comprehend or reluctance towards understanding diversity efforts as means of social justice for underrepresented groups. While NDSU does provide clear definitions of institutional definitions of these terms, respondents were either not aware of or chose to reject these definitions. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, race/ethnicity and gender were the most prominent themes in respondents’ remarks. The following comments illustrate this point:

“I had harassing anonymous calls referring to my race and reported to the right authority in the residence hall who felt/said it wasn't serious enough to be taken up. This made me feel unsafe. As I felt if the right authority doesn't think that was serious enough (probably because I'm a black and the people involved are whites) then I'm not so safe.”

“American blacks are well accepted here, because most of them come from professional backgrounds, and students have had few experiences with them. Native Americans and hispanics, however, are not as well accepted.”

“I feel that most of the issues and the types of discrimination that occur at NDSU are much more subtle than the types of responses that were options on this survey. For instance, students are much harsher in their evaluations of women faculty, and much less likely to give new women faculty (particularly YOUNG women faculty) the benefit of the doubt than they are new male faculty. Maleness carries with it an implicit assumption of competence and authority. Thus, many of the young female faculty are openly challenged in a nonrespectful manner in class, in meetings with students, and via email. Women have to PROVE their competence to the students in the face of a very hostile first year environment; this seems to not be the case for men. I have found that students are more likely to assume I am a ‘Mrs.’ rather than a ‘Dr.,’ which I believe goes along with this lack of respect for women's competence.”

“I run an ethnic friendly employee area. When complaints were made by people of color about racist treatment, my method was to confront the source w/out the victim. The explanation (excuse) invariably devolved to one of employer/employee and I had to make it clear, ‘you are not management. You both work for me.’ After 2 or 3 confrontations, this method has helped it sink
in that just because you are white does not give you automatic management status over someone of color. Not while you work here.”

What Should Be Happening in the Organization?

“I believe that NDSU has taken some important steps towards embracing diversity, but there is still a lot that needs to be done.”

Some of the questions that the University must address are: If an act of commission or an act of omission is perceived by someone either experiencing or observing the act, what policies decide if the event is ‘real’ enough to warrant the organization’s attention? Are the policies enforced consistently, efficiently, and effectively? In addition to relaying their ideas about experiences and observations of discrimination and harassment, respondents contributed possible solutions for improving the climate within the organization.

Suggestions for Improving the Campus Climate

Generally, respondents’ comments advanced few specific solutions. The following bulleted list, however, contains some of the respondents’ suggestions for improving the climate for diversity at NDSU.

Administration/Leadership

- More visible, supportive, and vocal leadership on diversity issues
- Become more responsive, supportive, and user-friendly
- Increase the recruitment and retention of administrators, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups
- Increase the number of women and underrepresented groups in positions of authority
- Reorganize upper-level management to “abolish the status quo”
- Establish and promote a clear understanding of short- and long-term goals
- Make all buildings accessible to people who are physically-disabled

All Employees

- Require courses and/or on-going training dealing with other cultures, diversity, and race
- Help staff understand their own ethnicity and biases
- Practice political correctness
Rankin & Associate, Consulting  
NDSU Campus Climate Assessment Project  
Final Report  
December 1, 2003

• Improve educational materials, services, and communication with underrepresented groups  
• Improve communication between administration and all staff

Students

• Require courses and/or on-going training dealing with other cultures, diversity, and race  
• Help students understand their own ethnicity and biases  
• Practice political correctness  
• Improve educational materials, services, and communication with underrepresented groups  
• Improve communication between administration, faculty, staff, and students

Is “Diversity” the Organization’s Responsibility?

Respondents’ comments were divided regarding whether or not diversity should be addressed by the University. Some respondents believed there is no need to find solutions to problems that do not exist. These individuals felt that NDSU adequately addresses climate and diversity issues, or that it is not the University’s responsibility to do so in the first place. The following opinions offer some insight:

“I think NDSU handles ‘diversity’ issues regarding the gay, lesbian, transgender community with top priority and everything else falls by the wayside, particularly if it concerns anything to do with Christianity, Jesus Christ, or God. Not exactly a wholesome place to be or a place I would want my child to attend college.”

“I think that our campus is a great campus for students of any race, gender, ethnicity, etc. The only things i ask are this: do not give people from different places special help, or try to make our university more ‘diversified’ just because it looks good to the world to be this way.”

“Many of the response choices assumed problems and did not offer an objective range of choices. There is a bigger problem with reverse discrimination.”

“This campus promotes cultural diversity, which i feel is a positive process. Though, it may be going to far, thus promoting reverse discrimination, which is seen in greater extent around the country. It is becoming harder for white males to get admitted or receive scholarships, many are female or minority only. This is stating it is ok to discriminate against white males”

Conclusion

“And we need to attempt to convince the white people who consider themselves ‘diversity gurus’ that there are people of color on our campus who want to work with them, who care about the cause of human diversity, who do have insights, information, and input to share, who live and breathe diversity, who have experienced and continue to experience racism, and who really are worth listening to. We want to work with you to make this campus a stronger, safer, and more diverse community for all students. We are willing to do our part to promote North Dakota State University.”
The comments submitted by respondents suggest that the organizational climate and diversity as an initiative are on a number of people’s minds. Hopefully, this analysis of the major themes included in the comments will help readers hear more clearly what that data in the earlier sections of the report suggested. One of the greatest obstacles in discussing campus climate was the range or lack of participant’s understanding of “diversity,” “equality,” “discrimination,” and “harassment,” to name a few. The discrepancies in definitions likely contribute to individuals’ inability to comprehend or reluctance towards understanding diversity efforts as means of social justice for underrepresented groups. While NDSU does provide clear definitions of institutional definitions of these terms, respondents were either not aware of or chose to reject these definitions. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, race/ethnicity and gender were the most prominent themes in respondents’ remarks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prominent Concerns</th>
<th>Some Respondents’ Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Men: Women employees &amp; students receive preferential treatment in relation to job responsibilities, promotions, family, financial aid</td>
<td>It is becoming harder for white males to get admitted or receive scholarships, many are female or minority only. This is stating it is ok to discriminate against white males, but not minority or females</td>
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<td>Women: not taken seriously by coworkers, administration, or students; forced to prove themselves in a way men do not, lack of promotions, equitable pay</td>
<td>A gender staff and faculty salary comparison study needs to be done. I feel there may be a possibility that females doing the same work as males here at NDSU may be paid less. During the last several years, a few female students have suggested to me that certain departments on campus (sciences/engineering for instance) appear to discourage female students from succeeding in their classes. These women have dropped classes and changed majors because of the hostile atmosphere towards women.</td>
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<td>Women: sexual harassment, safety</td>
<td>… at times the layout of the campus makes me nervous...it is dimly lit with a lot of trees and buildings. We could use more lighting to make me feel safer walking at night. This class was probably 99% males. The professor made comments numerous times about females, I was uncomfortable with them and dropped out of the class. Comments about looking at the girl sitting next to them….and the Ag journal not being a ‘playboy.’ Also other professors I have had on campus used very sexist statements...in examples...and the language that they use.</td>
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<td><strong>Race &amp; Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>Racism is systemic at NDSU. The anti-racism core team is four white people. The President's Diversity Council is lead by and administered by two white people. There were faculty of color that wanted to be on the Diversity Council and were ignored because they might not have a popular opinion about the climate.</td>
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<td>The “good old boys” network exhibits subtle and/or institutionalized discrimination to minorities</td>
<td>[as an underrepresented employee], I often feel ignored, undervalued, and distrusted. I often experience this type of peculiar treatment and feel invisible, alienated, and even unwelcome.</td>
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<td>Minority employees and students may be under- or unqualified for their jobs or admittance</td>
<td>We also need to do away with trying to get diversity and start hiring individuals who are qualified and who will stay in the area…the same should go for the students.</td>
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<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td>Christian religious customs monopolizes organizational culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Christian influence is overwhelming and oppressive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Christians are oppressed</td>
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<td><strong>Ideology of Diversity</strong></td>
<td>Attention to difference will only succeed in exacerbating tension, producing backlash, and creating division</td>
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<td>“Diversity” will improve the campus climate for all constituents</td>
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|             | Reverse discrimination                                         | You people let these mid-easterners blow us up, and then don't give a shit about the white or black Americans, but cater to the mid-easterners. I don't care about them, I don't want to learn about them, and I wish they would go back. They (mid-easterners) get tax breaks, school stipends, special scholarship opportunities etc. What the fuck do I get as a white student???

<p>| <strong>Administrative Leadership</strong> | Lack of follow-through in disconcerting matters, Failed to establish adequate diversity and inclusive goals | We need a position in administration (filled by a minority of color) to address these issues different from Equal Opportunity office which deals with complaints not with improving the campus climate. |
|                             |                                                               | The campus should try to make its support of diversity a bit more vocal. Let us all know that this university is accepting of all people, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc, because right now the general feel I get from the administration is indifference (with the posters and conferences done out of requirement more than actual concern). |
|                             |                                                               | I don't see the administration as very vocal and proactive in support of minority groups. I don't consider myself part of any minority group, but this is what I perceive from the outside looking in. |</p>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Job Status</strong></th>
<th>Support staff members are often thought of as second-class citizens</th>
<th>I feel there is a hierarchy between the faculty and staff. If you do not have a college degree, you are looked down upon and not given credit for your hard work and effort. Most of the discrimination I have observed or been made aware of has come from faculty and administrative offices. As an employee I have concerns about discrimination because of position both in attitude and in salary.</th>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>New, younger professionals are marginalized, As a younger full-time staff member, I often feel that I am discriminated against due to my age because people on campus feel that it implies a lack of experience and maturity - which is not always true. Also, I often am treated in an unfriendly manner until campus personnel realize that I am a staff member and not a student.</td>
<td>I feel that I have not been rehired for next year because of age discrimination. I have worked extremely hard, going well beyond my lectureship assignment, including doing several research and grant projects. Yet, when it came to hiring for a tenure track position for next year, one of the people I had mentored who is just completing a Ph.D. was hired rather than me…. No faculty member in this area is over 40 years old, and an older faculty member would add considerable depth to the department.</td>
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<td>Older professionals denied promotions due to their ages</td>
<td>The only issue of concern that I have personal experience with is that of non-traditional, older than average students. It often seems that students who live off campus and in particular students who are older and therefore have a varying concerns are somewhat overlooked or not considered in general policy.</td>
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<td>Non-traditionally aged students encounter difficulties or discrimination based on age</td>
<td>Lack of amenities &amp; support services for parenting students</td>
<td>There is not a whole lot for students older than average and have families to deal with to become involved on campus. I find it hard to get the help for tutoring or just to help with a certain subject. Everything is offered at night and there is no daycare provided or it is too late for people with children to be involved.</td>
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<td>Parenting Students</td>
<td>Discouraging or unaccommodating faculty</td>
<td>Single parent issues... it is a unique situation for us and some professors can be very unaccommodating (majority are not though) when our child gets sick etc....</td>
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<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Marginalization, discrimination, harassment</td>
<td>I believe different students experience different experiences on campus, based on their race, ethnicity. etc...I continue to believe that the GLBT is one of the most at risk populations here on campus. That is, at risk for violence, harassment etc. The majority of NDSU's GLBT students, faulty and staff are afraid to live open, and out of the closet life. I'm not exactly sure why this is, but there seems to me that something should be addressed…. there are times when I don't feel safe or welcomed on Campus, That if these people were to know who I really was they wouldn't talk to me, help me, or worse might hurt me.</td>
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<td>Too much emphasis on LGBT concerns</td>
<td>I disagree with NDSU's position of sexual orientation being a minority status category. For example, I know ex-homosexuals but not ex-Blacks.</td>
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